

**Subject:** Strengthening Communities Review – Progress Update

**Date of Meeting:** 13 July 2010

**Report of:** Director of Strategy and Governance

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**Wards Affected:** All

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 At the Governance Committee meeting of 9 March 2010, Members agreed to the implementation of a strategic Review of neighbourhood and community engagement (now called the ‘Strengthening Communities Review’). It was agreed that the Review would test existing models and provide recommendations for a range of public engagement activities into the future.
- 1.2 It was also agreed that:
- Written updates be provided to the Committee at every meeting between March and September 2010 and where appropriate, Governance Committee attendance and involvement be requested in key aspects of the Review process.
  - That a cross party working group be established to ensure Member involvement in the work.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the content of this written update.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes that the first meeting of the cross party working group was held on 29 June 2010.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Since the last Governance Committee meeting extensive research and consultation has commenced to map the wide variety of public engagement activity that exists in the city.
- 3.2 A package of additional funding has been identified to enable the purchase of independent evaluation which will focus on direct consultation with residents and third sector organisations involved in decision making. An experienced organisation has been appointed and will shortly commence work.

- 3.3 The first meeting of the cross party Members group took place on 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010 and Members present gave some useful insights into their experiences of engagement activity.
- 3.4 The first meeting of the newly formed Local Engagement Officers Working Group took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> June and it was agreed that the group would work towards greater joint working across the Council's engagement approaches (for example looking at where this is duplication of arrangements). A key outcome was an agreement that all departments should undertake a short self assessment exercise to map and evaluate their engagement work.
- 3.5 There have been constructive conversations with other public sector organisations with regard to the joint commissioning of engagement activity. This included a recent discussion at the Public Service Board at which it was agreed that this should be high priority.
- 3.6 The review was also presented to the Members Advisory Group, who oversee the grants and commissioning processes of the Communities Team. The review was met with interest and Members were keen to have ongoing involvement linked to the new cross party working group.
- 3.7 Equalities Impact Assessments are now being initiated with regard to commissioned community development activity to understand the impact of the work for individuals from minority communities.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Consultation with a huge range of stakeholders is embedded throughout the Review process and will include the cross party Member group.

#### **5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

##### Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The review of Strengthening Communities Commissioning activity in 2010/11 is currently funded within resources identified within the Policy Unit budget and funds available to strategic partnerships through LPSA Reward Grant (subject to any changes in funding). External funding has been identified to secure independent evaluation.
- 5.2 The longer term sustainability of this activity will need to be considered against funding available through the strategic partnership and Council for 2011/12 and beyond.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley*

*Date: 14 June 2010*

##### Legal Implications:

- 5.3 The report is for noting only. The activities documented in the report are consistent with the Council's legal powers and duties.

*Lawyer Consulted: Oliver Dixon*

*Date: 29 June 2010*

#### Equalities Implications:

- 5.4 The Strengthening Communities Review will analyse the extent to which community engagement provides effective opportunities for a range of minority groups and deprived geographical areas to have a voice in Council decision making processes. Where possible, the Review will also analyse the integration of these people and place agendas and made recommendations for further improvement areas.

#### Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 The Strengthening Communities Review will analyse the extent to which community engagement enables both minority groups and neighbourhoods to play an active part in sustainability activity. This will include a review of commissioning outcomes with a view to consider this area of work more in the future.

#### Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 On behalf of the Safe in the City Partnership, the Partnership Community Safety Team (PCST), Communities against Drugs and Environment Improvement Teams deliver a range of activities which engage and build cohesive communities. Some of these activities are integrated within the delivery plans of priority crime areas: facilitating the community led Racial Harassment Forum is one example of that. Other work such as supporting the network of Local Action Teams link closely with meeting the delivery requirements of Neighbourhood Policing and as such, have specific outcomes which are about identifying local policing priorities and delivering community safety solutions in partnership with local people. The PCST carries out targeted work with refugee and migrant individuals and communities and its programme of activities to 'build resilience to violent extremism ' is a specific programme of work with Muslim and other faith based communities. Performance on this programme is measured against national indicators within the LAA process.
- 5.7 The Partnership looks forward to participating within the strategic review of neighbourhood and community engagement' and achieving a consistent approach across the City

#### Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.8 This will be analysed through the Strengthening Communities Review.

#### Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.9 This will be analysed through the Strengthening Communities Review.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices**

None

### **Documents In Members' Rooms**

None

### **Background Documents:**

None